

Arvia Walker, Public Policy and Strategic Engagement Specialist
Planned Parenthood of Southern New England
February 22, 2017, Public Health Public Hearing
Testimony in support of HB-5764 AN ACT CONCERNING THE LICENSING OF BARBERS AND
HAIRDRESSERS.

Senator Gerratana, Representative Steinberg and Senator Somers and honorable members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Arvia Walker, Public Policy and Strategic Engagement Specialist at Planned Parenthood of Southern New England testifying in support HB-5764 AN ACT CONCERNING THE LICENSING OF BARBERS AND HAIRDRESSERS. Planned Parenthood of Southern New England serves over 64,000 patients yearly for reproductive and sexual health services in 17 health centers across the state. Planned Parenthood believes that every patient that walks through our doors has the right to comprehensive reproductive healthcare and deserves the resources to access that right. We know that people achieve reproductive freedom when they have full autonomy over their bodies and lives -- this not only includes access to health care but includes access to jobs and opportunities to take care of themselves and their families.

At PPSNE we know firsthand, through these patients' stories, the juggling act people have to play each month to pay their bills and meet their basic needs. When basic necessities are out of reach, it becomes impossible for our patients and communities to prioritize the health care of themselves and their families. As a provider and advocate it is our duty to center the lives of the patients that we serve everyday. It is critical that we as a state become a true second chance state and open up opportunities for individuals with a criminal record to rebuild and allow people to have autonomy over their lives. For the people who walk into our health center with more than just their reproductive healthcare needs but with their entire lives, this means being able to obtain financial stability, housing stability and all basic human needs. A criminal record should not be a life sentence once a sentence has been completed.

Barring individuals from career opportunities like being a barber or hairdresser is an injustice because some people are employed through such professions while incarcerated and learn the skills that can be transferred to create a fruitful career. We know that employment is one of the major factors in reducing recidivism rates. Recidivism rate for people who find employment after release is only 19%, compared to 32% for those who do not find gainful employment. The state of CT will become a stronger state by taking the questions around criminal history off of the licensing of these professions. This will open up the economy for not only the individual but also for our state by creating a stronger economy where tax dollars can be used more efficiently. Families and our state all win when everyone has the access to employment.

We have an obligation to every person in our state to make sure they have the opportunities to provide for themselves and ensure their families can live with the dignity they deserve. That's why I am urging you to support HB-5764 AN ACT CONCERNING THE LICENSING OF BARBERS AND HAIRDRESSERS and protect the basic rights and health of Connecticut families.